
Health Care Committee

HB 2539

Brief Description: Concerning disaster medical assistance teams.

Sponsors: Representatives Schual-Berke, Morrell, Simpson, Roberts, Moeller and Hudgins.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes the Governor to call Disaster Medical Assistance Teams into state service in the event of a public health disaster.

Hearing Date: 1/24/06

Staff: Chris Blake (786-7392).

Background:

Disaster Medical Assistance Teams (DMATs) are groups of medical personnel and support staff who are able to provide medical care during a disaster or other events. Each DMAT has a sponsoring organization that may be a medical center, public health agency, or other public or private organization. DMATs may be asked to respond to disasters in several ways such as triaging patients, providing medical care, or preparing patients for evacuation.

The sponsoring organization of a DMAT will enter into a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Homeland Security to serve as a national resource. DMATs, however, may be used in the communities in which they are based. When members of a DMAT are activated by the federal government, they are considered federal employees and are protected by the Federal Tort Claims Act which will indemnify them in the event of a malpractice claim.

Summary of Bill:

The Governor may call a DMAT based in Washington into state service if a public health disaster occurs or is imminent. If a federal disaster occurs simultaneously, the federal government has the first right to call the DMAT into service. The state shall pay for the supplies and equipment associated with the call for state service from the Disaster Response Account.

Members of a DMAT who are called into state service are provided all of the protections of an employee of the state and are considered state employees for the purposes of workers' compensation and death benefits. Such protections only apply if the individual has registered with the Military Department and provides direct medical care or support services to victims during a disaster.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 19, 2006.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.